

# Blindness Education, Screening, & Treatment Program Highlights



*A balanced diet, annual eye exam, and following a treatment plan, if necessary, can help save your vision.*

Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services

## Fiscal Year 2006 Accomplishments

Twelve contracts to provide comprehensive eye screening and referral for treatment for clients without financial means.

- 451 clients screened
- 48 referred to treatment for diabetic retinopathy
- 28 referred to treatment for cataracts
- 25 referred to treatment for glaucoma, and
- 7 referred to treatment for macular degeneration.

## Relevant Statutes

- RSMo 192.935—Fund and Program
- RSMo 301.020—Donation (vehicle)
- RSMo 302.171—Donation (license)

To read copies of these statutes, visit: [www.moga.mo.gov/statutesearch](http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutesearch).

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## What is the Blindness Education, Screening, and Treatment Program?

The Blindness Education, Screening and Treatment Program (BEST) was established and became operational January 1, 2001. The program is mandated by legislation (see side bar). The primary directive is to provide blindness prevention education, screening and referral for treatment for those without adequate coverage under a health benefit plan. The public education component provides information about eye conditions that may cause blindness and treatment options.

The Blindness Fund was also established in 2001. This fund is used to support implementation of initiatives. Since FY03, this funding has provided screening and treatment referral of clients with diabetes. This includes a dilated eye examination by qualified health care professionals and a follow-up referral if an abnormal finding is detected.

In FY06, the BEST program screened a number of individuals and referred many to treatment programs (see side bar). The screening and treatment referral program helped many who may have otherwise not received

necessary care to prevent blindness. The screening program continues in FY07.

Each time you ask the customer, “Do you want to donate to the blindness fund?”, you help support program initiatives. This question should be asked of each customer seeking to obtain or renew a drivers license, permit, or a state identification card, or wanting to process a motor vehicle registration.

This quarterly newsletter is a new educational tool to help provide eye health education, report program achievements, and serve as a reporting mechanism for local fee offices. The reporting feature will be coming soon. I hope you find this newsletter informative and beneficial.

*Virginia Beatty*  
BEST Program Coordinator

## Leading Causes of Blindness

The leading causes of vision loss among children are uncorrected refractive errors, strabismus (crossed eyes), amblyopia (lazy eye), and injury. Among adults, the four leading causes of blindness are glaucoma, cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and age-related macular degeneration. There is considerable evidence that half of the cases of visual impairment and blindness could be prevented through early detection and timely treatment.

(A Plan for the Development of State Based Vision Preservation Programs,  
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors)